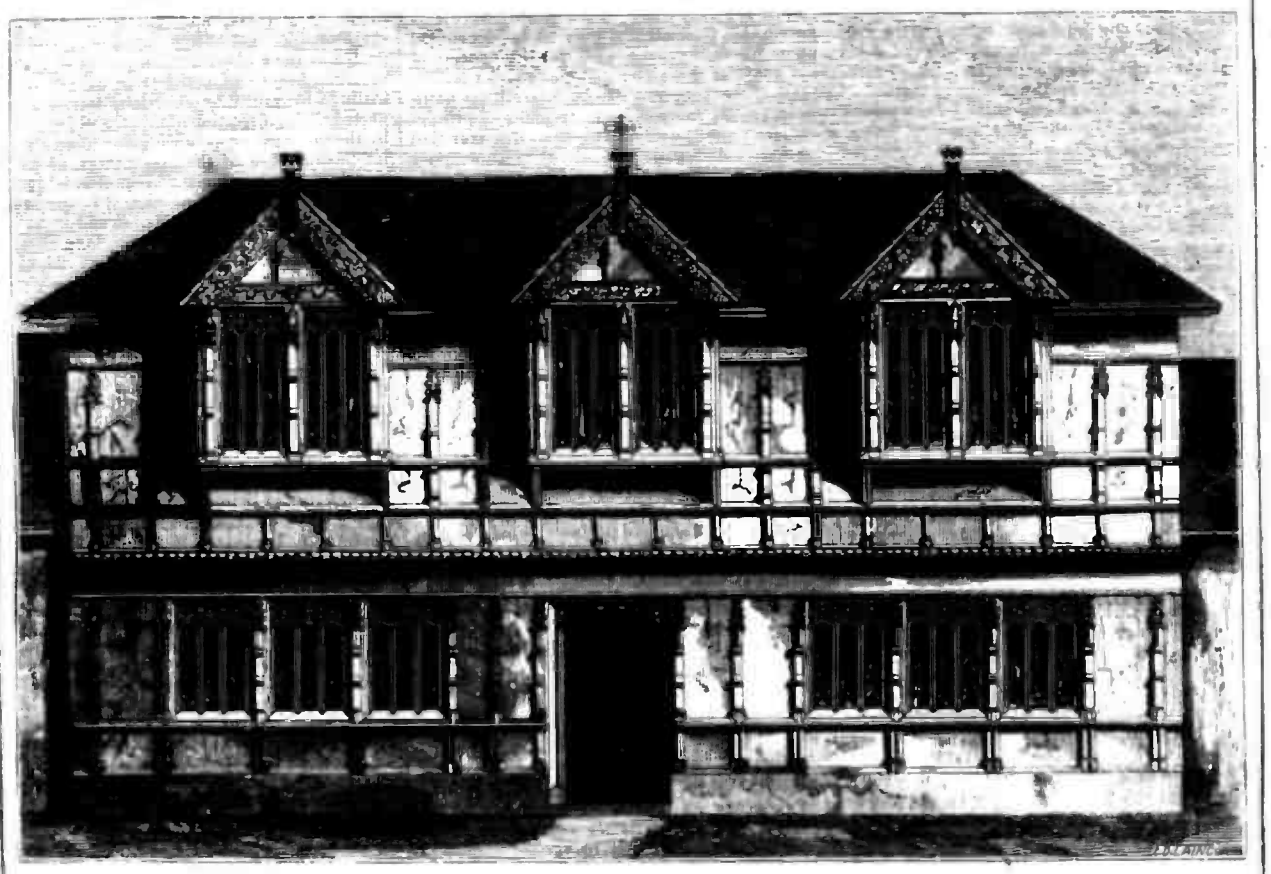
FORD'S HOSPITAL, COVENTRY.



ANCIENT STREET ARCHITECTURE.

So very few remains of our ancient street architecture are now to be found, that every good specimen met with should be the more carefully examined. Every year some old building is removed to be replaced by another more in accordance with the taste of the present generation, and although we must much regret the loss of so many beautiful examples of domestic architecture, and feel that our streets have no longer the picturesque appearance they once possessed, yet much is gained on the score of light and air (those great preservers of the public health) by the wide streets and lofty houses of the present day. The great evil has been, that many of these interesting remains have been swept away without any thought or care to preserve correct representations of them; and although some improvement is manifest in this respect (thanks to the exertions of the various archæological societies), still there is much to complain of. Coventry, Chester, and Warwick, have perhaps more remains of street architecture than any other towns in the kingdom, and without doubt some of the most interesting. A few houses are yet to be found in Oxford, Tewkesbury, and other places, and in York are still to be seen some curious examples of entrances to courts, which appear to have been common to several houses. In other towns are some remains of houses, with the details much destroyed, many of them originally used as inns, as the George, at Glastonbury; another at Rochester; the New Inn, at Gloucester (the latter much modernized); and some others. In the market-place at Newark there is also a curious house of the time of Edward IV., built with timber and plaster, several small figures with canopies over them being formed of the latter material. In this as in many other instances are long ranges of windows extending across the whole front. We have been particular in pointing out as many specimens as occur to us, feeling sure that in some instances attention need only be called to them to prevent their being wantonly swept away; or if that is unavoidable, that at least some satisfactory representations of them may be taken.

Ford's Hospital, at Coventry (the street elevation of which is the subject of the accompanying illustration), is one of the finest specimens of ancient street architecture now to be found, and it is much to be regretted that no attempts are made to keep it in good repair, of which it stands greatly in need. We mentioned it some time ago, when the British Archæological Association visited Coventry.

The only entrance to the building is from the street, by the doorway shewn in the illustration. This leads to a narrow open court, on each side of which are ranged the dwellings, affording accommodation for thirteen persons. The design and the detail of the fronts in the court are equally good, and present as much variety as in the more important street front. The whole of the detail is of the most delicate description, and it was a matter of much regret that we had not time to do more, during a couple of hours' stay in Coventry, than make a sketch of the principal front.

ROYAL INSTITUTE OF BRITISH ARCHITECTS.

On the 29th ult., Mr. Poynter, Vice President, in the chair, the committee appointed to examine the Cavalière Matas's design for a new façade to the church of S. Maria del Fiori, at Florence, brought up their report, which was received, and will probably be sent to Florence. The opinions which we have expressed on this subject were fully borne out by the report itself, and, for the credit of the Institute, the less we say of this latter the better. We find that there is positively one series of complimentary opinions on this project in print already, for circulation, "patent-medicine" fashion, and repeat distinctly what we have already said, that the design is altogether incommensurate with such a proceeding.

Mr. Tite read some discursive remarks on pointed architecture, communicated by Mr. Joseph Gwilt, and which are to form a chapter in the second edition of his "Encyclopædia." They embraced notices of the freemasons, masons' marks, symbolism, which the writer condemned as an idle affair, and general proportions. These he considered were arithmetical rather than geometrical, and that the figures 3, 5, and 7 regulated many of the mediæval buildings. He considered it unfortunate that so much attention is given at this time to the study of details rather than to the discovery of general principles, which were more deserving of attention, because, if the stem of the plant were right, the leaves and flowers were sure to come so.

Some drawings of mural distemper paintings in the church at Lingfield, in Surrey, were exhibited, consisting of separate figures, about two feet high. The whitewash having been removed last summer, in the course of repairs in one part of the church, the "commandments" were found written, and then, under this writing, the figures in question.

Lingfield church, built in the time of Henry the Sixth, and one of the most important churches in Surrey, being 116 feet long and 64 feet wide, has been recently restored at considerable expense,—the interior, if we may believe a correspondent on the subject, not very satisfactorily.

MR. FARLAR AND THE LATE WESTMINSTER SEWERS' COMMISSION.—Mr. Farlar has forwarded us a copy of his letter to the late commission (mentioned in THE BUILDER, page 572), protesting against the use of the rates for defending an action brought against Mrs. Webb (which action, he says, was simply for the purpose of pressing on the commission to carry out the Act obtained in July last), and requests us to print it. The fact, however, of our not having done so at the time, shews that we did not consider it desirable,—it is now even less so.

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